have given 'highest priority' to participatory Irrigation Management in Irrigation Management;

(b) if so, the steps being taken by the Government to expedite activities in Participatory Irrigation Management; and

(c) whether any special Central assistance to the States for rehabilitation to expedite Participatory Irrigation Management is being sanctioned?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) Yes, Sir. The Union Government have given priority to Participatory Irrigation Management.

(b) The following steps have been taken to encourage farmers participation in the management of irrigation :

Giving management subsidy to farmers' assiciations under Centrally sponsored Command Area Development Programme;

Holding National Conferences and sponsoring State level and Project level conferences on Participatory Irrigation Management with farmers' participation in the State and project level to create awareness;

Conducting training courses at National level for officers and at State level for officers and farmers;

Providing States with guidelines and assisting them in preparation of Manuals for formation of associations and introducing amendments in Irrigation Acts;

Advising State Governments to constitute High Level Working Groups to formulate policies and guidelines for constituting farmers' associations;

Setting up of a Working Group by Planning Commission on Participatory Irrigation Management for the IX-Plan.

(c) No, Sir.

Ground Water in West Bengal

2880. SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that ground water in seven districts of West Bengal has been found to have four times more of the chemicals than the safe limit exposing more than a million and seriously affecting 2,00,000 people of the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to solve the drinking water problem of the people of the area?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) to (c). Yes, please. In April, 1996 there are 984 habitations spread over in 8 districts of West Bengal reported to have arsenic content in the ground water with more than the permissible limit (0.05 mg/1).

The Government of West Bengal has prepared a perspective plan at a total cost of Rs. 750 crores indicating long term and short term measures to tackle arsenic contamination. The replacement of tubewells by deeper ones, construction of new piped water supply schemes and construction of Sanitary Protected Wells and Rain Water Harvesting Structures for immediate relief and establishment of surface water based Piped Water Supply Schemes, tubewell based new Piped Water Supply Schemes establishing new spot sources for solving the problem on a long term basis are some of the salient features of the Perspective Plan.

Linking of National Highway No. 31 and 34 in Bihar

2881. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is a proposal for connecting National Highway No. 31 and National Highway No. 34 in Katihar district of Bihar;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a link road connecting NH-31 and NH-34 in Katihar district of Bihar was sanctioned in 1982 and all the preliminary works were done long before;

(c) if so, the reasons for this work could not be taken up and completed till now; and

(d) the present position of this project and the time by which it is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b). The work for construction of major bridge over river Manananda including improvement of road in Paranpur-Labha-Dilli-Dewanganj section a part of Katihar-Harishchandarpur road (linking NH 31-34) was approved by this Ministry in 1982 under the scheme of 'Central Loan Assistance' for State Roads of Inter State Importance.

(c) and (d). It is reported that technical problems in sinking of wells are hampering the progress of work and the work is spilling beyond the earlier target date of March 1995.

Two Lane into four Lane Road on N.H. 17

2882. SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to convert National Highway No. 17 between Mangalore-Udupi and Coondapur into four lane road;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.